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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which principals, teachers, parents, and students report that the recommendations of the 1981 Middle School Report were being implemented in each of the five middle schools in the North York (Ontario) school system. The 13 recommendations addressed such issues as the philosophy of the middle school, the organization of middle schools, staff characteristics and leadership models, staff development, the middle school curriculum and program, parent/community involvement, school size and facilities, costs, and suggestions for improvement and change. The results (gathered from questionnaires and/or interviews of all grade 6, 7 and 8 students, all parents, all teaching and support staff, and all school administrators in each middle school) indicate that, in general, the schools are making good progress toward implementing the recommendations. (BW)

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RESEARCH REPORT

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MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

1983-84

Murray Rowan, Patricia Crawford

May, 1984

TM 840 551

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Dr. Al Virgin provided advice and guidance throughout the study. He also conducted the interviews with principals and vice-principals and supervised the preparation of an interim report summarizing the principal/vice-principal, teacher and support staff interviews.

We also acknowledge the assistance provided by Sally Erling and Dorothy Peebles in the preparation and summary of the interview notes with principals/vice-principals, teachers and central staff.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In June, 1981, the Board approved a recommendation endorsing a JK - 8, 9 - 13 system with a grade 6, 7, 8 middle school component. Since then five middle schools have been established; two are JK - 8 schools with middle school components and three are grade 6 - 8 schools.

On 10 June, 1983, the Board approved the following recommendation:

> For the years 1983-84 and 1984-85, the Director of Education will submit an information report to the Board on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

Accordingly, Operations Council requested that Mr. R. Matheson, Chairperson of the Early Adolescent Education Development Committee, work with staff from Educational Research and Evaluation Services to develop procedures for gathering information to determine the progress of the implementation of the thirteen recommendations contained in the Middle School Report, June 1983.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which principals, teachers, parents and students report that the recommendations of the Middle School Report are being implemented in each of the five middle schools.

The Middle School Recommendations

"The primary purpose of the middle school is to help students in grades 6, 7 and 8 develop to the maximum, their potential, while reducing to a minimum the developmental problems associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence. To that end, the middle school ought to provide a stable, caring and nurturing environment. The staff should bring to it a strong and positive sense of moral responsibility to assist each student's emotional, intellectual and social growth. Some of the objectives of the program will be:

- to foster in each student positive self-awareness and self-concept;
- to promote self-direction;
- to provide each student with a measure of control over life in school; and
- to provide wholesome social experiences and a sense of community."

(Middle School Report, June, 1983)

An abbreviated version of the thirteen recommendations is as follows:

1. that the middle school program incorporate principles of instruction based on valid empirical findings about the unique needs of pre and early adolescents.

2. that the middle school program be organized in units of time varying from predominantly large blocks in grade 6 to mostly shorter ones in grade 8.

3. that the middle school have a prescribed curriculum with 60-70% of the time spent on communications and environmental studies and 30-40% on the arts.

4. that the middle school curriculum include specific program expectations.

5. that the middle school program be organized so that each child will be closely associated with one teacher who monitors the child's academic and social progress and acts as liaison with parents and other staff.

6. that the program of the middle school encourage students with the help of their parents/guardians to develop habits of regular home study that extend the work of the classroom in ways appropriate to the child's grade level, skills and study needs.

7. that each principal and staff develop a program of communication and community involvement.

8. that the staff selected for teaching and for positions of responsibility be committed to the purposes of the middle school and suited to its needs.

9. that every middle school will have a principal and vice-principal.

10. that city-wide support systems be developed to assist in the establishment and maintenance of middle schools.

11. that the middle school building and facilities accommodate a distinct transitional program based on the needs of middle school students.

12. that the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development assist middle school staffs in the implementation of the recommendations of this report.

13. that the implementation of the recommendations of the Middle School Report be carefully planned, monitored and evaluated.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection procedures were developed by Educational Research and Evaluation Services in co-operation with members of the Early Adolescent Education Development Committee and the administrators of the five middle schools.

Data were gathered by means of questionnaires and/or interviews from the following groups of people in each middle school:

- all grade 6, 7 and 8 students
- all parents
- all teaching and support staff
- all school administrators

In addition, information was provided by principals regarding their timetable and in-school leadership organization; by Personnel Services regarding teacher absenteeism rates; by Finance Services regarding the in-school per pupil expenditures; and by Planning regarding Optional Attendance, transfers in and out of middle schools, and interborough transfers.

The details of the information gathered from each group are outlined in the following sections.

Middle School Students

In February, 1984, all middle school students were asked to complete the North York Self Concept Inventory and a brief questionnaire regarding their perceptions of their school. Students were asked to agree or disagree with 30 statements which depicted various aspects of the philosophy, organization, curriculum and program, and degree of parent involvement with the middle school as outlined in the recommendations. In addition, grade 8 students were asked to complete three items regarding the preparation received for their transition to secondary school.

Middle School Parents

The questionnaire for parents included 34 statements about the nature of the program offered by middle schools, their child's experience in the middle school, and communication by the school with parents. Parents were asked to agree or disagree with each statement. In addition, they were invited to write in any comments about their child's experiences in making the transition to the middle school, the features of the middle school which they like best, and suggestions for change. The questionnaires were distributed to all parents in late March/early April. Students were asked to deliver the questionnaires home and to return completed questionnaires to the school in an envelope provided. The percent of questionnaires returned by parents in each of the five schools was as follows:

School	Parent Percentage Return
A	63%
B	61%
C	60%
D	47%
E	41%

Middle School Staff

In January and February 1984, all teachers in the five middle schools were interviewed in groups of six to eight. Prior to the interview each teacher received a memo introducing the Research staff who would be conducting the interview and a list of four questions to be asked during the interview. It was suggested that they take time prior to the interview to think about their responses and to make notations of points important to them. Typically the interviews lasted an hour.

The questions teachers were asked to respond to were as follows:

1. What are some strengths of the middle school concept (what do you like about it)?
2. At present, how is your middle school meeting the needs of the early adolescent in the following areas: academic, social and emotional?
3. Is there anything you don't like about the middle school concept (any suggestions for change)?
4. How has teaching in a middle school been unique from your past experience?

In answering the above questions, teachers were asked to consider the following areas:

- Organization of School
- Curriculum
- Leadership
- P.D. Activities
- Reporting
- Links with the Community
- Staff Morale
- Student transition from elementary school and to secondary school

Middle school support staff, i.e, secretarial, caretaking, A.V. technicians, teacher aides and school nurse were also interviewed following a similar procedure. A summary of their interviews may be found in Appendix E.

Teacher Absenteeism Rates: Since there is some evidence from studies carried out in the United States that teacher attendance improves during the first years of middle school operation, the Personnel Department was requested to compile monthly data on middle school teacher absenteeism from the opening of each school to December 1983, as well as to provide annual averages for North York elementary teachers for the same time period.

Middle School Principals/Vice-Principals

In late January, staff from Research and Evaluation Services visited the five middle schools to talk with the principals and vice-principals. The interviews, which lasted between one to two hours, centered on philosophy, program, staffing and support services, as well as principals' concerns and suggestions for improvement.

The principals were also asked to provide a copy of their timetable, their language policy, and a description of their in-school leadership organization.

Additional Data

To determine the extent to which middle schools attract and/or lose students, the Planning Department was requested to identify all students requesting Optional Attendance or Interborough Transfer in or out of a middle school from January of the year during which each school opened. Parents of the identified students were telephoned by Research staff to confirm their reason for requesting the change of school and to gather information as to the parents' satisfaction with the education their child has received since the request. A summary of these telephone interviews is provided in Appendix F.

Finally, the Finance Department was asked to determine the in-school per pupil cost for middle schools as compared with representative schools with JK-5, JK-6, and 7-9 organizations.

THE FINDINGS

The middle school recommendations outlined on page 2 provide the basis for the summary and presentation of all of the information gathered. The recommendations have been grouped under the following headings:

	Recommendation
. Philosophy of the Middle School	(1)
. Organization of Middle Schools	(2,5)
. Staff Characteristics and Leadership Models	(8,9,10)
. Staff Development for Middle Schools	(12)
. Middle School Curriculum and Program	(3,4,6)
. Parent/Community Involvement	(7)
. Middle School: Size and Facilities	(11)
. Costs of Middle Schools	
. Suggestions for Improvement and Change	

Each section includes:

- a complete statement of the relevant recommendations from the June 1983 Middle School Report
- the nature and source of the information to be presented
- a summary of the findings.

Philosophy of the Middle School

RECOMMENDATION

1. that the middle school program incorporate principles of instruction based on valid empirical findings about the unique needs of pre and early adolescents.

   a) The program will be personalized through observation, diagnosis and consequent adjustment to match the child's stage of development, learning rate, learning capacity, and learning style.

   b) The program will provide an abundance of concrete experiences for students in order to enable them to experiment and to explore as the basis for thought, expression and learning.

   c) The program will provide opportunities for children to make decisions about their learning on a day-to-day basis in the classroom setting.

   d) A large proportion of the child's time will be spent in participating in small group and individualized activities.

   e) The middle school will provide a unified three year program for grades 6, 7 and 8.

   f) At all three grade levels, parts of the program will be organized in large blocks of time in order to allow for integrated and/or interdisciplinary approaches to learning.

   g) The program will provide a wide variety of diverse learning experiences in the curriculum, in co-curricular activities and/or in electives to accommodate and extend the wide range of interests of the children.

   h) Each middle school will have a program of continuous student evaluation that stresses a developmental approach to learning and uses a personalized reporting system that is diagnostic and prescriptive.

   i) The program will provide opportunities for each student to take part in out-of-school education experiences every year and in a residential outdoor education program at least once during the middle school years.

As part of the examination of the extent to which the various dimensions of program delineated in Recommendation 1 are being implemented in the five middle schools, students and parents were asked to agree or disagree with statements about the nature of student-teacher interaction, the evaluation process, the extent to which students have opportunities to make decisions about their day-to-day learning, and the variety of subjects and learning

experiences available. Parents were also asked to elaborate on their child's transition from the elementary to the middle school. This section concludes with excerpts from the teacher and principal interviews related to their preceptions of the middle school as a transitional program designed to meet the unique needs of early adolescents.

In the **student** questionnaire, eleven items were included related to the philosophy of a middle school operation and the unique needs of pre and early adolescents. The following response patterns represent the responses of 1,298 middle school students in the five middle schools. The reader should note that the student and parent data reported in the body of the report are based on all respondents in each group. Tables are provided in Appendices A and B which show the percent agreement for students and parents at each grade level.

Student Responses to Items related to the Philosopy of the Middle School

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. My teachers are willing to spend some time with me when I have a problem with my school work.	88	5	5
. In class we are often given the chance to work on our own.	87	8	5
. My report card helps me to understand how well I am doing in my classes.	86	9	6
. This year I have or will take part in a field-trip.	82	6	13
. In class we are often given the chance to work together in small groups.	81	13	7
. My teachers teach in many ways, not just by talking to the class, (e.g. trips, in-class activities experiments, acting out situations).	81	12	7
. My teachers listen to what I have to say in class.	77	13	11
. I think my middle school offers a good variety of subjects.	76	15	10

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. At our middle school we make use of people and places in the community, (e.g. field trips, speakers or visitors from the community).	65	12	22
. When we are working on projects and assignments our teachers let us make some of the decisions about the topic, the form of presentation and the length.	64	21	15
. There is a way for me to make suggestions if I see a need for improvement in my middle school.	51	23	26

As is evident, students are very positive about their schools. More than three-quarters of the students agreed that their teachers spend time with them when they have a problem with homework, are attentive to what the student says in class, provide opportunities for students to work on their own as well as in small groups, and use a variety of teaching techniques, including field trips. In addition, most students believe their report card is helpful in their understanding of how well they are doing in class and the school offers a good variety of subjects. Each of these points reflects some part of the intention of Recommendation 1.

In contrast to the above, only half of the students are aware of a way to make suggestions for improvement if they feel it necessary. This is one item where there were significant differences among the grades in terms of their response. For example, 57% of the Grade 6 students agreed with this item compared with 43% of the Grade 8 students.

Thirteen items on the **parent** questionnaire related to the philosophy of middle school and the parents' perception of the school climate. The results represent the opinion of 698 parents of middle school students.

Parent Responses to Items related to the Philosophy of the Middle School

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. My child's report card assists me in understanding her/his progress.	88	5	7
. My child enjoys going to school.	86	9	5

. This middle school provides a proper balance between the basic skills and a variety of other courses and activities, (e.g. physical education, music, visual arts, family studies, industrial arts).	85	4	11
. The teachers encourage students to think for themselves.	83	4	14
. This year my child has or will take part in a field trip.	83	3	13
. My child's report card assists me in understanding his/her academic, social and emotional needs and abilities.	78	12	11
. The students often participate in small group activities.	77	7	16
. This middle school emphasizes the learning of the basic skills.	76	5	20
. My child receives the individual attention he/she needs.	69	13	19
. The program my child receives in this middle school takes into account her/his individual needs and abilities.	67	10	23
. My child's ideas and opinions are encouraged and listened to by the staff.	59	11	30
. The teachers provide opportunities for the children to make decisions about their learning on a day-today basis in the classroom.	58	10	32
. Grade 6 students belong more in a middle school than they do in an elementary school.	55	17	27

Over eighty percent of the parents agreed that their child enjoys going to school, the school is providing a proper balance between basic skills and other courses and activities, the teachers encourage the students to think for themselves and their child has or will take part in a field trip this year.

As well, most parents feel that the report card being used by middle schools aids them not only in understanding their child's progress in general, but, assists them in understanding various aspects of their child's development - academic, social and emotional needs and abilities.

Approximately three-quarters of the parents agreed that students often take part in small group activities and the middle school is emphasizing the learning of basic skills.

At least two-thirds of the parents indicated that their child was receiving the individual attention they believe she/he needs and the program offered at the school takes into account their child's individual needs and abilities.

Approximately half of the parents indicated that the staff at the school listen to and encourage their child to express his/her ideas or opinions and provide opportunities for the children to make decisions about their daily learning in the classroom. It should be noted, however, that one-third of the parents felt they had insufficient information to be able to respond to these two items.

Finally, while only a small majority of all parents agreed that grade 6 students belong more in a middle school than in an elementary school, almost three-quarters of the parents with children in grade 6 agreed with the statement.

A major task of the middle school is the provision of a smooth educational transition for students from the elementary school. Seventy-one percent of parents agreed that their child's middle school provided such a transition. Parents were invited to elaborate on their response to this item and approximately 70% chose to do so.

Forty-nine percent (241) of the parents who agreed that the middle school provides a good transition added the following comments.

Comment	No. of Responses
. Happy with the transition/my child had little if any trouble adjusting/the transition was very smooth/our child's self esteem has improved/we are pleased with the program.	101
. Students find the program more interesting; their work habits have improved and they are benefitting from the program.	81
- my child finds the program demanding and interesting because of the wide variety of subjects and increased homework/the school is providing her/him with a good education - work habits and attitude have improved/our child is more responsible and mature	(36)

No. of Responses

- students are introduced gradually to the rotary system and an increased workload - this prepares them for high school. (32)

- the core/team system works very well (9)

- all homework and classroom changes have been given slowly and steadily. The students are gradually encouraged to accept additional responsibility and think for themselves (4).

. The school and staff facilitated the transition 55

- the teachers and the school provide a secure and caring atmosphere/the teachers are qualified, well organized and readily available, this encourages learning and feelings of self respect (37).

- we like the idea of a middle school/middle school benefits the students, e.g. it has a much more sensitive environment than other schools (6)

- the transition to middle school from elementary school was smooth because the children were still housed under the same roof/I am glad this school has elementary and middle school together. (6)

- the introductory session (pre-visit) helped to develop enthusiasm and dispel fears of a new school (4)

- the transition has been very successful, but this may be a function of the super staff, and not inherent in the middle school system (2)

. Other parent comments 11

- transition went smoothly because middle school is similar to elementary school/very little pressure is applied to children (6)

- the transition went smoothly but the program is not challenging enough. My child had daily homework in elementary school, but no homework in middle school/there should be more homework assigned (5)

Forty-nine percent (23) of the parents who disagreed that the middle school provides a smooth transition added the following comments:

Comments	No. of Responses
. The transition was not smooth, it was too fast. It should have been done gradually/it is ridiculous to expect students to adapt quickly to an increased workload in school/they were not adequately prepared	8
. I am sure the teachers made a good effort, but there is room for improvement/ it was very difficult because the teachers were not encouraging and offered very little individual help to students	5
. No need for middle school/middle school is unnecessary/disagree with the basic idea behind middle school. There is too much emphasis on peer involvement in this type of setting.	5
. Do not believe child is ready for middle school/the old system was much more disciplinarian, and encouraged good behaviour.	3

Some parents were unsure about the nature of their child's transition to middle school. The following are a few representative comments.

- there probably was a smooth transition but it is hard to judge objectively as the transition was clouded by the closure of schools and reorganizing of others.

- I am still not sure whether my child was ready to go from public school to middle school.

- wasn't aware there was supposed to be a major transition. "Transitions" are difficult for parents to recognize because each new school year is a transition for their child.

In summary, seventy-one percent of the parents who responded agreed that the middle school provided a smooth transition for their child from the elementary school. Comments by parents elaborated on how happy they were with the transition, their child's adjustment to middle school, the improved work habits and interest their child is showing towards school and how well the staff aided their child's transition.

During their interviews, **teachers** were positive about the ways in which the middle school facilitates the transition from elementary to secondary school. The teachers felt that student academic needs are being met through a wide variety of programs and activities including an emphasis on "hands-on" activities. Both academic and social needs are furthered by the co-educational approach in industrial arts, family studies and physical and health education and the integration of all students in regular classes.

Opportunities to develop socially are provided through the child-centered concept, frequent student-teacher interaction and by teachers providing time for discussion with groups and individuals with problems. Teachers believe the gradual introduction of the rotary system is allowing students to adjust at a more natural rate to secondary school. The transition to secondary school is also aided by the younger students (grade 8's) being able to experience leadership and responsibility earlier.

Teachers were very supportive of the use of the middle school report card which provides for comments concerning the child's strengths and weaknesses academically, socially and emotionally, as well as their marks. Coupled with this means of parent/teacher communication, teachers were supportive of parent/teacher team interviews as having helped them in understanding individual student needs.

Principals and vice-principals highlighted the strengths of the middle school concept during their interviews. They felt the paramount strength was the focus on a child-centered program which is based on the unique needs and characteristics of the early adolescent.

Most principals remarked that the grade 6 - 8 age group is more homogeneous than the grade 7 - 9 grouping and noted such differences as improved behaviour, a decrease in discipline problems and vandalism, a more relaxed atmosphere, more fun and more spontaneity. Organizationally, this grade grouping also has advantages such as dealing with only one teacher federation and not having to provide for the grade 9's on the credit system.

The transitional nature of the program was viewed by principals as a strong component of the middle school concept. It was felt that the gradual move from integrated core to subject specialities over the three years is most appropriate for intermediate education. The team teaching aspect built into this model also seems to create an atmosphere conducive to the development of more positive relationships between and within groups, e.g. staff, students and parents.

With regards to the provision of a unified program for grades 6, 7 and 8, school administrators mentioned several aspects of the schools' operation which facilitate the delivery of the unified program:

- the in-school leadership model includes convenors of curriculum areas which span all three grade levels
- the philosophy of gradual evolution in a transitional school
- reference to P.P.J.D. and Intermediate Guidelines collectively rather than separately
- team teaching and team planning meetings
- course of study packages which encompass all three grades.
- extra-curricular activities for all grades together
- uniform reporting process

Summary

All four groups (students, parents, teachers and school administrators) feel that the middle school approach is addressing the needs of the early adolescent age group. Students are offered a good variety of subjects along with a balance of basic skills, different learning styles and experiences both in and outside the classroom.

Parents, staff and administrators feel the transition from elementary school has been very good due to the development of a child-centered approach and the care shown by the staff. As well, they feel the personalized reporting system that includes an opportunity to be more comprehensive about the child's development, has helped the child by enhancing both parent and teacher understanding of the student's progress.

Organization of Middle Schools

RECOMMENDATION

2. that the middle school program be organized in units of time varying from predominantly large blocks in grade 6 to mostly shorter ones in grade 8.

   a) In grades 6, 7 and 8, at least 75%, 50% and 33% of the time respectively will be spent in large blocks. The remainder of the time may be spent in shorter periods in a rotary program.

   b) In all grades the large blocks of time will allow a group of students to associate with a teacher or a team of teachers. Where the program involves a team of teachers they must cooperatively develop expectations, routines, program and strategies.

   c) Where feasible, subjects should be semestered in order to provide a wide variety of experiences and minimize the number of subjects taken concurrently.

5. that the middle school be organized so that each child will be closely associated with one teacher who monitors the child's academic and social progress and acts as liaison with parents and other staff.

School administrators in each of the five middle schools provided details of their timetable organization to enable an analysis to be carried out of the extent to which they are able to organize their program to meet the intent of the above recommendations. The following tables provide an indication of (i) the average amount of time spent in large blocks at each grade level, and (ii) the average amount of time devoted to core at each grade level. Further details of the timetable analysis are presented in Appendix C.

Average Amount of Time in a Continuous Block in Middle Schools*

Grade	Continuous Block (minutes per day)	Percentage of School Day (5 hour day)
6	199	66%
7	147	49%
8	113	38%

* Amount of time does not include recess/break or lunch

Average Amount of Time in Core In Middle Schools

Grade	Core Time (minutes per day)	Percentage of School Day (5 hour day)
6	193	64%
7	156	52%
8	135	45%

As is evident, while not entirely meeting the criteria specified in Recommendation 2 a), the schools are able to organize their program so that at grade 6 66% of the school day is devoted to the presentation of program in large time blocks and is gradually reduced to 38% at the grade 8 level. Further, the schools use these large blocks of time to focus primarily on the presentation of a core program.

It was also recommended that, where feasible, subjects be semestered to minimize the number of subjects taken concurrently. As indicated in the following table, schools are most likely to provide visual arts, industrial arts and family studies on a semestered basis.

Subjects Scheduled on a Semestered (Half Year) Plan

Semestered Subjects	Number of Schools		
	Grade 6** *	Grade 7**	Grade 8
Visual Arts	2	1	1
Industrial Arts	5	5	2
Family Studies	5	5	2

* One middle school included in the grade 6 tally, stated that students studied each of the three subjects listed for one third of the school year (1 term).

** At another school, students rotate industrial arts and family studies every quarter of the school year in grades 6 and 7.

Both **students** and **parents** were asked to comment on middle school organization in terms of the benefits of a core/team period and the number of subjects being taken this year.

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
Parents			
. My child feels comfortable in core/team period because she/he knows the teacher(s) and other students well.	83	3	14
. Having a teacher(s) work with my child for a large block of time, allows me to speak to someone who has a good understanding of my child's needs and abilities.	72	4	24
Students			
. I feel more comfortable in core/team period because I know the teacher(s) and other students well.	56	29	15
. I think I am taking too many subjects this year.	14	78	9

As is evident a much larger percentage of parents than students endorse the value of the core/team period. Parents feel that not only is their child comfortable because she/he knows the teachers and other students well, but also the parent benefits in terms of being able to communicate with a teacher who knows their child well.

In their interviews, **teachers** indicated that both staff and students benefitted in four ways from the middle school organization. Firstly, core provides stability for students. In addition to fostering familiarity and understanding between students and staff which allows teachers to attend to individual student program needs, core also provides more opportunity for flexibility of curriculum delivery and integration of subjects.

Secondly, a rotary concept, which increases through the three grades, provides an increasing opportunity for students to associate with more staff and students in the classroom. Students benefit academically from encountering specialists in specific fields and teachers benefit from the opportunity to specialize.

Thirdly, team work facilitates the delivery of program. The team approach, characterized by a sharing of resources and knowledge and staff continually communicating, has aided decision-making and closer monitoring of student development.

Finally, teachers were very supportive of the convenor role and organization of guidance staff to assist both students and staff in a child-centered approach.

Summary

At all grade levels, middle schools have scheduled large blocks of time for instruction predominantly for the delivery of subjects by a core teacher or team of teachers. In all middle schools industrial arts and family studies have been semestered in grades 6 and 7. Both parents and staff are very positive about the benefits of core/team periods.

Staff Characteristics and Leadership Models

RECOMMENDATION

8. that the staff selected for teaching and for positions of responsibility be committed to the purposes of the middle school and suited to its needs.

    a) Middle school teaching staff will have knowledge of, and skill in using methodologies appropriate to this age group.

    b) Each middle school should provide adequate counselling for these transitional students.

9. that every middle school will have a principal and vice-principal.

    a) Each school will design an in-school leadership team to facilitate communication and liaison with staff, central support personnel, students and community.

10. that city-wide support systems be developed to assist in the establishment and maintenance of middle schools.

Each middle school has a principal and vice-principal, plus an in-school leadership team to assist in the organization and delivery of curriculum. Each middle school has at least three convenors (one school has a fourth convenor) who have broadly-based curriculum responsibilities across all three grades. The areas of responsibility generally include arts, communications, and environmental studies. In some cases, provision is made for leadership in student support services although most principals feel this should be a separate "paid" position of responsibility. Many convenors also serve a second leadership function at one grade level. There is considerable diversity from school to school in terms of the particular complement of subject responsibilities assumed by individual convenors. A comprehensive description of the different roles of various convenors and the organization of teacher teams is included in Appendix D.

The middle school report states that teaching staff should have knowledge and skill in using methodologies appropriate to middle school students. In selecting their staff and leadership team, principals tended to look for the following qualities:

- a desire and ability to work with the early adolescent age group
- a good teaching record
- elementary orientation, preferably with some junior high experience
- generalists with expertise in several areas and, ideally, one subject speciality

Some additional requirements for convenor positions included leadership skills, ability to work with others, experience or involvement in the designated areas and/or familiarity with the school. The principals reported that their experience in selecting staff with the desired qualities for middle school has met with varying success primarily due to circumstances related to the opening of each school. Principals emphasized that they need flexibility in choosing appropriate staff if they are to meet the needs of the school--particularly a small middle school.

Five items on the **student** questionnaire asked students to comment on their perceptions of the qualities and characteristics of the teaching staff.

Student Perceptions of Teaching Staff

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. My teachers seem to enjoy teaching	64	9	26
. My teachers seem to understand students my age and their needs.	57	19	25

. There is an adult in my middle school with whom I can talk.	55	24	21
. My teachers really care about me.	49	13	37
. There is a feeling of care and concern for one another at this middle school.	47	25	28

Fifty-five to 65% of all middle school students agreed that their teachers seem to enjoy teaching, to understand student needs and that there is an adult with whom they can talk. Of the remaining 35 - 45% of students, approximately 25% indicated they didn't know how to respond, therefore they could neither agree nor disagree.

While approximately half of all students agreed that their teachers care about them and that there is a feeling of care and concern for people at their school, there were sharp differences across the grades with respect to these two items. For example, 62% of grade 6 and 52% of grade 7 students agreed that their teachers care about them, while only 38% of grade 8 students agreed that such is the case. Similarly, approximately half of the grade 6 and 7 students (52% and 53% respectively) felt that there is a feeling of care and concern at their school as compared with 39% of the grade 8 students. Over one-quarter of the students don't know whether there is a feeling of care for people at their school.

Parents also, were asked for their perceptions of the staff.

Parent Perceptions of Teaching Staff

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. The teachers really care about my child	75	5	20
. My child's middle school seems to meet the special needs of this age group of students.	75	7	18
. The teachers in this middle school seem to enjoy working with early adolescents.	63	4	34
. There is a feeling of care and concern for one another at my child's middle school.	63	11	26

Parents were generally more positive in their responses about staff than were students. Three-quarters of the parents believe the teachers care about their child and the school is meeting the special needs of early adolescent students. Two-thirds of the parents believe that the teachers appear to enjoy working with early adolescents and that there is a caring atmosphere at the school. As was the case in terms of the student response patterns across grades, there were some differences among parents of grade 6 and 7 students as compared with parents of grade 8 students. For example, 72% of the parents of grade 6 students agreed that the teachers enjoy working with early adolescents compared with 64% of grade 7 parents and 55% of grade 8 parents. Approximately one third of the parents stated that they did not know whether the teachers enjoyed working with this age group.

In examining **teacher** comments made during the interviews, a number of characteristics of teaching staff were identified as contributing to the organization and operation of middle schools. For example, staff perceive their colleagues as possessing:

- a wide variety of academic interests, not just in their own area of specialization
- a high level of dedication to early adolescents and their needs
- high morale and a sense of rejuvination because teachers chose to work in a middle school and are involved in the planning and implementation of curriculum
- a sense of challenge; teachers with elementary school experience find the older students a challenge, while teachers with junior high and secondary experience find the younger students the challenge
- a high level of cohesiveness amongst all staff partially due to the in-school organization and partially a result of personal motivation.

In order to cope with the demands of this age group and the effort needed to implement a new program, teachers acknowledged that they need considerable energy and tend to put pressure on themselves to do a good job.

An additional source of evidence for the effort devoted by teachers to fulfilling their responsibilities was provided through an **analysis of teacher absenteeism** rates in the five middle schools as compared to all North York elementary teachers.

Middle School Teacher Absence

School Year	No. of Middle Schools	No. of Middle School Teachers	Average No. of Days Absent per Teacher	
			North York Middle School Teachers	North York Elementary Teachers
1981-82	1	18.9	9.3	9.5
1982-83	4	71.6	6.1 Range (5.4-7.7)	9.9
1983-84	5	94.8	5.8* (4.5-7.3)	

* The 1983-84 average and range of teacher absence is a projection based on actual data (September to December 1983) and 1982-1983 trends.

The data indicate that teacher absenteeism in middle schools has declined over the past two to three years. As well, it appears that middle school teachers experience less absenteeism than North York elementary teachers as a group.

Finally, teachers endorsed the in-school leadership models in their schools. Through the in-school organization they feel they are better able to share ideas; plan, develop and implement programs; provide a child-centered approach; and be more aware of individual student needs. Three roles teachers were most appreciative of were convenors, grade team leaders and guidance specialists.

Summary

Parents, teachers and school administrators agreed that there is an atmosphere in the schools of care and concern for early adolescents; the students themselves, however, were less positive.

Both teachers and administrators perceive the teaching staff to be highly motivated and involved in providing for student needs and working together to provide a good middle school program.

Both teachers and administrators believe the in-school leadership organization has helped staff by providing an environment that assists them in being more aware of student needs and encouraging the staff cohesiveness necessary to implement the middle school concept.

Staff Development for Middle Schools

RECOMMENDATION

12. that the Superintendent of Curriculum and Staff Development assist middle school staffs in the implementation of the recommendations of this report.

    a) A needs assessment procedure will be developed to assist middle school staffs in identifying appropriate staff development activities.

    b) A professional development program will be offered based on diagnosed needs.

    c) Curriculum units will be written with the assistance of practising classroom teachers.

During the early stages of implementation of each middle school, school administrators had to determine their staff's professional development needs. Some principals indicated that they had an awareness of where the gaps were and what was needed through their own observation and knowledge of the staff's background and experience. Most principals, however, conducted some type of needs assessment, be it formal or informal, with or without professional assistance, in-school or off-site. Specifically some of the methods mentioned included:

- dialoguing with staff, e.g. a group comfortable in expressing needs and concerns
- input channelled through the leadership teams or convenors
- sessions at Cedar Glen, e.g. communications lab to generate and/or confirm needs
- principal knowledge of educational research on the program needs of the early adolescent.

In order to meet some of the identified needs, middle schools used a variety of resources and resource people, such as staff development, support services and curriculum department assistance.

The early focus of professional development tended to deal with the nature of the middle school, the needs and characteristics of the pre/early adolescent, and getting the middle school started. The following is a list of some specific areas where assistance has been offered so far:

- early adolescence
- special needs
- report writing
- language policy
- staff development
- special education
- team planning
- brain growth
- guidance
- research

Principals and vice-principals noted examples of curriculum support with particular reference to the Coordinator of Intermediate/Senior Education as a key figure for overall direction and writing of courses of study. Assistance was obtained for specific subject areas as well, such as math, French, science, computers, music and visual arts.

Principals reported that they use all or most of the integrated units (e.g. Life in New France. . .) which have been developed by the Curriculum Department. Generally, these units have been received positively with requests for more units and additional assistance in their implementation.

In terms of future professional development, most middle school principals intend to emphasize program in terms of OSIS, curriculum support and writing, and developing and implementing integrated units. Additional areas or services identified for future consideration are:

- more P.D. on the early adolescent
- increased use of program leaders and co-ordinators in subject/skill areas where in-school expertise is lacking
- staff retraining
- effective teaching styles and age groupings
- leadership
- guidance
- special needs
- the changing clientele and changing demands
- improving parent communication

During the discussions about board support services and assistance, the middle school principals and vice-principals recounted some difficulties they had experienced and offered some suggestions.

In terms of curriculum assistance, there was a favourable reaction to the existing integrated units developed by the Curriculum Department and an expressed desire that this service continue. Although some small-scale curriculum writing is done in the school, they felt that teachers do not have the time or expertise to write comprehensive, integrated units themselves. It was suggested that provision be made for more release time and/or more information-sharing with the other middle schools to avoid "re-creating the wheel". More direction in the implementation of such documents would also be appreciated.

Regarding support services in general, principals remarked that often assistance was not directed specifically to the middle school philosophy. One respondent felt there was a lack of awareness among support staff about the middle school and that it tends to get lumped together with elementary or junior high schools rather than being viewed as a separate entity.

As well as their general agreement with the school administrators' comments, teachers also mentioned that middle school curriculum guidelines and resources are not yet available in a number of subject areas, therefore staff must rely heavily on the convenors as a source of information.

Middle School Curriculum and Program

RECOMMENDATION

3. that the middle school have a prescribed curriculum with 60-70% of the time spent on communications and environmental studies and 30-40% on the arts.

   a) The grade 6 curriculum will include communications (language arts, mathematics, French), environmental studies and the arts (music, visual arts, physical education).

   b) The grade 7 curriculum will include English, mathematics, history, geography, science, physical education, French, instrumental/vocal music, family studies, industrial arts and visual arts.

   c) The grade 8 curriculum will include the following compulsory subjects: English, mathematics, history, geography, science, physical education and French. The following subjects may be compulsory or optional: instrumental/vocal music, family studies, industrial arts, typing and visual arts.

4. that the middle school curriculum include specific program expectations.

   a) Each middle school will establish a language policy according to the Ministry of Education document, Language Across the Curriculum. As part of this policy language arts/English instruction will be combined with at least one of environmental studies, history, geography, or science in an inter-disciplinary approach.

   b) Appropriate guidance support programs will be offered to each middle school student.

   c) Each middle school will have a Learning Resource Centre which is continuously staffed and stocked with print, non-print and technical materials.

   d) Each middle school will offer a balanced physical and health education program which will promote a healthy life style. Some program units will be coeducational.

   d) Family studies and industrial arts will be available equally to both boys and girls.

   f) Vocal music will be taught in grade six and may be supplemented by instrumental music.

6. that the program of the middle school encourage students with the help of their parents/guardians to develop habits of regular home study that extend the work of the classroom in ways appropriate to the child's grade level, skills and study needs.

The data examined with respect to the middle school curriculum and program offerings included:

- information derived from the analysis of timetables
- student and parent perceptions about homework study habits, the library resource centre, guidance program, the encouragement of positive attitudes toward learning and participation in extra-curricular activities
- student performance on the North York Self Concept Inventory

As outlined in Recommendation 3, 60-70% of the middle school curriculum is to be spent on communications and environmental studies and 30-40% on the arts. The following table summarizes the information derived from an examination of the timetables with respect to this recommendation.

Estimated Percentage of Time Spent in Curriculum Areas

Curriculum Area	Percentage of School Day (5 hours day)		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Communications	40%)	42%)	42%)
Environmental Studies	24%) 64%	24%) 66%	23%) 65%
Arts	32%	30%	30%
Other (e.g. Guidance)	5%	5%	6%

As is evident, the schools are providing a program in keeping with the direction specified in the recommendation. The proportion of time spent in communications includes the following subjects: language arts/English (including drama and library), mathematics and French. In environmental studies, the time includes history, geography, science and, in some schools, work with computers. The remainder of the scheduled school day is allocated to the arts area (30%) including music, physical and health education, visual arts, industrial arts and family studies in all grades and typing. Other programs, such as guidance, comprise approximately five percent of the classroom time at all three grade levels.

When asked about their Language Across the Curriculum Policy, all schools stated that individuals or committees are presently working on a draft policy to be shared with the staff prior to it being finalized. In most cases the policy is being developed outside of class time and due to all the other activities teachers are involved in, more time is needed to complete the task. As well, both teachers and principals felt they would benefit if some assistance was provided regarding the proper process for developing policy statements.

Although the schools have not yet finalized their policy, all schools are teaching language arts/English using an integrated or interdisciplinary approach in keeping with the intent of Recommendation 4. More specific details about other areas taught using either an integrated or interdisciplinary approach may be found in Appendix C.

As indicated earlier in the section on Philosophy of Middle Schools, all schools offer coeducational programs in industrial arts and family studies and at least three of the five schools offer coeducational programs in physical and health education with the exception of units on sex education and wrestling. In addition to providing a balanced physical and health education program, all schools provide opportunities for students to participate in sports activities and special interest groups outside of regular class time. Sixty-five percent of the students reported taking part in such activities; 66% of parents reported that their child participates.

The Middle School Report recommends that vocal music be taught in Grade 6. Two schools reported that their music program in Grade 6 contains both vocal and instrumental instruction; the other schools offer only vocal instruction.

With respect to the provision of appropriate guidance support programs, both **students** and **parents** were asked to comment on their experiences. Thirty-four percent of all students indicated that they had talked to the guidance counsellor at least once this year. In terms of each grade, this represented 29% of Grade 6 students, 34% of the Grade 7's and 41% of the Grade 8's. Thirty-nine percent of parents agreed that their child's involvement with guidance counselling services has been satisfactory. Fifty percent of parents either did not respond to this item or indicated they didn't know.

The Grade 8 students were asked to respond to three additional items concerning assistance in planning their future. The following results represent the responses of 502 Grade 8 students.

Responses of Grade 8 Students re Assistance in Planning Their Future

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. In general, I feel this middle school is helping to prepare me for secondary school.	66	18	16
. I get help from a staff member at this school to decide which courses I should take in high school.	62	29	9
. A staff member at this school is helping me to learn about career and job opportunities.	40	50	10

In February, when the questionnaires were completed, approximately two-thirds of the Grade 8 students had received help in making their course selections for secondary school and felt that the school was helping to prepare them for secondary school. While forty percent of the students indicated that one of the middle school staff was helping them to learn about career and job opportunities, 50% disagreed that such help was being provided.

Parents of the Grade 8 students were also asked to respond to three items concerning guidance and counselling services. The following results represent the responses of 259 parents of Grade 8 students.

Responses of Parents of Grade 8 Students re Guidance and Counselling

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. This school is adequately preparing my child for secondary school.	62	13	26
. Guidance/counselling services are assisting my child in choosing an appropriate program for secondary school.	58	17	25
. Guidance/counselling services are assisting my child in becoming more knowledgeable about career and job opportunities.	47	21	32

Almost two thirds of the parents of Grade 8 students felt that the middle school is preparing their child for secondary education. Approximately half of the parents indicated that their child had received assistance in choosing an appropriate program and in becoming more knowledgeable about career and job opportunities. It should be noted, however that at least 25-32% of the parents did not know if their child had received such assistance.

A further expectation of middle schools is that they have a Learning Resource Centre staffed on a full-time basis and stocked with a variety of print and non-print materials. Sixty-seven percent of both students and parents agreed that the resource centre provides a variety of both print and non-print materials. There is, however, quite a range of opinion between Grade 6 and Grade 8 students. Eighty-one percent of Grade 6 students agreed that the Learning Resource Centre is well-stocked as compared with 55% of Grade 8 students. Approximately 59% of all students agreed that someone is always available in the Learning Resource Centre to help them.

Students and parents were asked about the school's expectations regarding homework and the development of good study habits. Approximately 85% of both students and parents agreed that the school expects the child to do homework. Sixty-three percent of students and parents felt that the school has helped the child to develop good study habits.

Finally, as stated in the Middle School Report, a key ingredient is that:

> "The middle school program must be personalized, provide a climate of stability and foster co-operation among all involved in each student's learning and development. To that end, the program ought to be organized to develop strong supportive relationships within the school and its parents and community." (p. 2)
>
> "Some of the objectives of the program will be: to foster in each student positive self-awareness and self-concept; to promote self-direction; to provide each student with a measure of control over life in school; and to provide wholesome social experiences and a sense of community." (p. 1)

Students were asked to complete the **North York Self Concept Inventory** which provides an assessment of students' feelings about themselves in the context of the school environment. The following table presents the average self concept scores obtained by pupils at each grade as well as the average score obtained by other North York students at the same grade.

North York Self Concept Inventory

Grade	No. of Students	Maximum Score	**Average Score**	Range of Scores	Standard Deviation of Score	**N.Y. Expected Average***
6	368	30	**20**	2-30	6.2	**19**
7	435	25	**17**	0-25	4.9	**17**
8	480	25	**16**	0-25	4.9	**17**

* Derived from norms developed for North York junior high school students in 1981-82. North York Self Concept Inventory, Junior High Level, February, 1982.

The results indicate that, on the average, the self concept of middle school students falls within the range expected for North York students in grades 6 - 8.

Students further indicated their positive view of their middle school when 79% agreed that their school is providing them with a good education. Parents, also, were generally positive in their opinions about the middle school as evidenced by their responses to the following items.

Parent Perceptions of the Middle School

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. This middle school is providing my child with a good education.	83	5	12
. This middle school assists students in developing a positive attitude towards learning.	78	7	16
. This middle school assists students in developing good character and self-respect.	75	7	17

The comments of both principals/vice-principals and teachers with respect to program have been presented in other sections of the report and are therefore not repeated.

Summary

Middle schools are providing the proportion of time in each curriculum area as prescribed in the middle school recommendations. Each school is still in the process of preparing their Language Across the Curriculum policy, although they are offering language arts/English on an integrated basis at all grades.

In general, students and parents agree that the program being offered is providing students with a good education including the development of student self-respect; a positive attitude towards learning, including homework; the opportunity for involvement in activities outside regular class time; regular coeducational classes in specific subjects; and a Learning Resources Centre that contains a good variety of material. Both students and parents agree that there should be more assistance provided related to guidance and counselling services.

Parent/Community Involvement

RECOMMENDATION

7. that each principal and staff develop a program of communication and community involvement.

Each of the four groups of respondents was asked to comment on the nature of the school's communication with parents and the community.

Parents responded to the following five items on their questionnaires.

Parent Responses to Items Related to Communication and Community Involvement

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. The school encourages me to call or visit the school if I have a concern about my child.	90	3	6
. The school is effective in communicating its purposes and procedures to parents and the community.	73	7	19
. Members of the community are encouraged to call the school if they have any problems with students from the school.	67	3	30
. The school is aware of the needs and concerns of parents and the community.	59	8	33
. This middle school utilizes resources from the community to facilitate or enrich the educational program.	53	6	41

As is evident, 90% of the parents agreed that the school encourages them to call or visit whenever they have a concern about their child and 73% of parents agreed that the school is effective in communicating with parents and the community. For the remaining three items, while over half of the parents agreed

- that the school is aware of the needs and concerns of the community
- that members of the community are encouraged to call the school if they have concerns
- that the school utilizes the resources of the community

approximately 30% of the parents who responded indicated that they had insufficient information to be able to respond.

Students also completed four items on their questionnaire related to relationships with the community. Approximately two-thirds of the students agreed that their parents are knowledgeable about the school, are encouraged to call or visit and that their teachers engage in activities to foster student respect for the community. Approximatedly 25% of students

however, indicated that they didn't know about the extent of their parent's knowledge of the school and whether or not their parents and the community are encouraged to contact the school.

Student Responses re School/Community Involvement

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know/ No Response %
. Our middle school and teachers make us aware of the need to respect our community, (e.g. school and neighbourhood properties, parks, plazas).	69	15	17
. My parents are encouraged to contact or visit the school for any purpose.	61	16	23
. People in the community are encouraged to call the school if they have any problems with students from our middle school.	61	11	29
. My parents have a good idea of how this school works.	53	19	23

During their interviews, **teachers** made the following comments concerning community relations and communication with parents.

- school-community relationship is good/there is better community involvement and awareness/strong tie between school and community; a sense of belonging
- students are more likely to encourage their parents to attend school functions
- emphasis on parent-teacher communication, e.g. telephone, personal interviews, school functions and new report form
- strong link with parents; good rapport through reporting process and home visits; teachers feel free to discuss social emotional development and problems with parents
- there is less community involvement in middle school compared to elementary, but greater than junior high

As part of their interview, the middle school **administrators** mentioned the following activities and methods which they have used to promote communication and community involvement:

. open house, parent nights

- school newsletter or space in a community newsletter
- PTA/home and school
- informal coffee meetings
- parent-teacher interviews at reporting time
- occasional letters or bulletins from the principal
- graduation
- use of parent volunteers, e.g. library, trips, special events . . .
- parent survey
- the expectation for teachers to maintain frequent contact with parents

Reporting student progress to the parents is another aspect of communication. In two schools the same report card is used from grade 6 through to grade 8; in two others there are slight variations which reflect the transitional nature of the program. The following are representative comments from teachers:

- report cards are more personal and meaningful with comments on strengths and weakness of students (academic, social and emotional as well as marks)/new form of reporting reflects a more comprehensive communication of student progress

- involvement of the teacher team in parent interviews has been advantageous in understanding student needs.

Middle School: Size and Facilities

RECOMMENDATION

11. that the middle school building and facilities accommodate a distinct transitional program based on the needs of middle school students.

    a) Preference will be given to accommodating the middle school in a building separate from other elementary and secondary schools.

    b) Preferably, the middle school will be housed in an existing junior high school building.

    c) In order to provide an appropriate middle school program the optimum population would be 500 students and the minimum population would be 300 students.

    d) In order to emphasize distinctive identity, each middle school will incorporate the term Middle School in its name.

All **principals** interviewed expressed strong concerns about their ability to provide appropriate programs if the school enrolment continues to decline since there will be problems in staffing, timetabling and school organization.

The enrolments reported by the schools in February, 1984, ranged from 340 to 235 students. Only one school reported a population over three hundred students; both JK-8 schools contained less than three hundred students in their middle school component.

Although principals and vice-principals agreed that **250** was the **bare minimum** number of students necessary to provide an adequate middle school program, they are finding it difficult to provide a "good" program with only 250-300 pupils. One person stipulated that adequate staff must be made available. It was suggested that an "ideal" enrolment would be between 350-500 students.

Principals are worried about the declaration of surplus staff and the accompanying loss of expertise and specialists which would inevitably lead to a loss in the quality of the programs offered. In addition to losing staff, they may also be faced with retraining specialists who are only required half-time and have no other skills, such as teaching core. Consequently, principals feel that eventually they will become "ad hoc programmers", where the program is dictated by the staff available rather than student needs. Such a program merely "reflects what we've got, not what we want or what's best".

Other problems principals identified as attributable to declining enrolment included a lack of variety or choice in extra-curricular activities, the inability to provide adequate planning time during the school day, difficulties in integrating special education students as the regular population decreases and the danger that parents may start to look elsewhere for alternatives.

Overall, flexibility is vastly reduced as enrolment declines and in the face of this, some principals expressed concerns about staff morale and burnout as their teachers have to take on more and more responsibilities, many of which are outside their area of expertise.

Finally, some principals expressed a fear that the school organization might gradually move to a JK-8 with the eventual loss of the middle school component. The maintenance of an intermediate component with a sufficient number of students was stressed, particularly by the principals of a combined elementary and middle school. Principals argued that the adolescent program would not be feasible with split or mixed grades at the 6, 7 and 8 levels. It was also noted that effective adolescent programing really requires the special facilities of a junior high plant.

Generally, **teachers** were happy with the facilities available but they too expressed concerns about the impact of declining enrolment on the size of staff, expertise required to maintain delivery of programs and time to do a good job.

Students and **parents** were asked to comment on the facilities of the middle school. Eighty-four percent of parents and 87% of students agreed that the facilities provided are good.

In summary, both principals and teachers emphasized the difficulty in providing a good intermediate program in a school with a student enrolment less than 250.

Costs of Middle Schools

In order to determine the 1983-84 costs for middle school education, the Finance Department was asked to compile estimates based on in-school variable costs, excluding non-variable costs such as heating, utilities and repairs.

The variable costs included the following:

- Salaries
  - Principal and vice-principal
  - Teachers
  - Secretaries and A.V. technicians
  - Teacher aides and para-professionals
- Position of responsibility allowances
- Supplies

Included in the cost analysis were the following conditions:

- salaries were based on 1983-84 contracts and other costs on the 1983 calendar year
- in JK - 8 schools, only vice-principals costs are accrued to the middle school; principals are budgetted for in the elementary component (JK - 5)
- all middle schools have 1.5 additional staff in their 1983-84 allocation
- paraprofessional staff are included as assigned to specific schools
- secretarial and A.V. technicians are assigned to middle schools based on junior high school policy

The following are the per pupil costs calculated for each school plus the average per pupil cost for grade 6 - 8 schools and the grade 6 - 8 component of JK - 8 schools.

Middle School	Cost Per Pupil	Average Cost Per Pupil
	$	$
Grade 6 - 8 school		
A	2,825	
B	3,061	3,045
C	3,217	2,831
Grade 6 - 8 component		
D	2,386	2,470
E	2,537	

The estimated 1983-84 average cost for provision of education in the three middle schools housed in separate buildings is $3,045 per pupil. It should be noted that one of these schools is a Special Needs School. In the two schools where the middle school is a component of a JK - 8 school the average cost is $2,470 per pupil. The average cost of operating the five middle schools is $2,831 per pupil.

Comparable estimates were also prepared for a small sample of JK - 6, JK - 5 and 7 - 9 schools. They are as follows:

Type of School	Average Cost Per Pupil	# of schools included in calculating the estimate
JK - 5	$ 2,948	3
JK - 6	2,309	3
7 - 9	2,526	2

Although only a small sample of schools was included in the above calculations and schools vary considerably in terms of a number of factors which make comparisions difficult, in general, the cost of middle school education is within the range of costs of education provided by other schools in North York.

Suggestions for Improvement and Change

Parents, teachers and principals identified a number of problems related to middle schools and offered suggestions which would enhance the implementation of the middle school program. The comments and suggestions made by each group are discussed separately in the following sections.

Parents

Parents were asked to respond to the following two statements:

- Some of the things that are presently being done at my child's middle school which I would like to see continued or expanded are:
- Some of the concepts and practices at my child's middle school which I feel are undesirable and would like to see changed are:

Forty-three percent of the parents wrote responses to the first statement, many of which were phrased in the form of suggestions for change or improvement. These comments are organized in the following four major categories:

- Continue as well as expand activities related to specific subject areas
- Provide more out-of-school and extra-curricular activities
- Continue to provide conditions which will encourage the development of academic and study skills

- Increase parent involvement in the school

A detailed listing of the comments in each of these four areas is provided on the following pages.

	No. of Responses
(1) Continue as well as expand activities related to specific subject areas	194

. Arts

- allow more time with musical instruments/encourage children artistically (33)
- teach cooking and sewing (26)
- industrial arts should be available to all students (21)
- physical education needs to continue with expert teaching/vary the gym program (9)
- teach keyboarding and related skills (8)
- teach sex education, nutrition and information about drugs (5)

. Communications

- put more emphasis on reading and writing (23)
- continue to teach math/structure the program according to an individual student's abilities (7)
- teach German and French/make French classes more interesting/offer French Immersion (6)

. Environmental Studies

- students should learn more about history and geography (5)
- continue to teach science in the form of chemistry, physics and basic biology concepts (4)

. Other

- computer education should be made more accessible (37)
- provide special classes for those who need them (10)

(2) Provide more out-of-school activities and extra-curricular activities	160

- take the children on more field trips to the Science Centre, Museum, Planetarium, Art Gallery, Stock Market and other cities, either by T.T.C. or by school bus/travelling on the T.T.C. teaches students how to move from one place to another within the city (49)

- schedule more sporting events, e.g. intramural and inter-school sports (38)

No. of Responses

- have more extra-curricular activities going on in the school/schedule them either at lunch or after school to encourage more involvement (35)

- encourage activities related to the arts, e.g. musical shows and visits by established artists and art groups (19)

- establish a number of special interest clubs, e.g. a photography or chess club (7)

- continue - the youth centre (5), A.P.E. program (3) science fairs (2), the Metro Program; it encourages the understanding of the mentally handicapped (1)

(3) Continue to provide conditions which will encourage the development of academic and study skills 105

- teach basic skills and encourage the development of effective study habits by assigning daily homework and projects/involve students more in competitive learning situations (52)

- encourage good relationships between teachers and students - have teachers work with students on a one-to-one basis or in small groups/assess individual students abilities and structure the program accordingly (41)

- discipline students more/develop a behaviour code for interaction with teachers and other students (12)

- continue with the core/team system (7)

- study hall/cafeteria - keep the study hall open at lunch/open cafeteria in the morning/serve healthier food (7)

- allow independent studies to be balanced with supervised activities (3)

- move staff with students to provide consistency (2)

(4) Increase parent involvement in the school 7

- teacher/parent communication could be increased (5)

- use parents as support staff (1)

- implement activities and programs with parents and students working together (1)

In addition, some parents made very positive general comments to endorse the way things are being presently done at their child's middle school.

- keep everything as it is/"I believe that all the things that are presently being done at my child's middle school should continue" (25)
- teacher/parent communication is excellent (10)
- the present method of reporting is the best I have seen yet (5)

Twenty percent of the parents (i.e. 137) commented on things they do not like at their child's middle school and would like changed. Their comments focussed on three areas:

- changes in the present program
- the teacher's role vis à vis students
- the administrative role

	No. of Responses
(1) Variations on Present Curriculum	77

- change subject emphasis - more emphasis on computers (4), music (4), history (3), individual suggestions (8); less emphasis on special education (2), family studies for males (1)
- an increased emphasis on student acquisition of basic skills, particularly the "3 R's" and sound, responsible study habits (17)
- more homework (14); less homework (2)
- more school athletics/participation, rather than ability, should be judged/allow children to take some risks in their outdoor games and activities if the are oriented to valid teaching objectives (7)
- advanced/enriched/gifted students must be provided with specialized programs (6)
- less field trips (4); more field trips (2)
- examinations/more frequent testing (3)

(2) Teaching staff must assume a more active role in their students' progress	43

- more frequent teacher-parent interviews in order that parents may be kept informed as to their child's progress (10)

No. of Responses

- more individual attention must be paid to students in-class (6), and out-of-class (2)

- teaching positions must be dependent on ability (i.e. competence, interest, motivation, preparation) rather than tenure (7)

- teachers must respect their students, avoiding condescension or discrimination (6)

- teachers must motivate students to learn (5)

- teachers must closely monitor their students progress and respond accordingly to any aberrations (4)

- more intra-staff communication regarding individual student progress (2)

(3) A more visible administrative role vis à vis discipline and communication 32

- stricter discipline needed regarding conduct and behaviour, attendance and dress code (23)

- more frequent office-parent communication concerning attendance, curriculum, student progress; in the form of a newsletter (6)

- Guidance services must be more visible, and useful/ a more cohesive, continuity between secondary and middle school guidance counsellors is necessary (3)

As was the case with the previous question, some parents (i.e. 99) indicated that they were satisfied with the current concepts and practices, and so there was no need for change.

Teachers

During the course of their interviews, teachers identified the following three problem areas and made suggestions for improvement.

. Lack of Sufficient Board Support for Middle Schools in terms of Curriculum/Program Materials;

. Organizational Factors Hinder Complete Implementation;

. Too Few Staff; Too Little Subject Expertise.

Lack of Sufficient Board Support for Middle Schools in Terms of Curriculum/Program Materials: Teachers perceive little commitment on the part of the Board to the middle school concept in that there are few consultative staff who are understanding of the middle school approach and little funding for curriculum development and classroom materials to support middle schools. The lack of consultative staff with middle school training and the inability of convenors to provide specific assistance while being responsible for a large number of subject areas, forces teachers to spend considerable time creating, updating and implementing curriculum in addition to their teaching duties.

Teachers expressed a need for more curriculum guidelines and classroom materials based on early adolescent needs and a greater exchange of ideas with staff in the elementary school. Teachers also expressed a need for more professional development designed specifically for middle schools.

Organizational Factors Hinder Complete Implementation: Teachers identified class size and timetabling constraints as factors hindering a complete implementation of the middle school approach. The large classes limit the amount of individual attention given students, and the variety of activities which can be offered. They feel that the present timetabling does not provide enough block time for core as well as other subject areas, nor for teachers to meet as a team to prepare and provide for extra help, or contact parents or consultative staff.

They suggested that time be set aside in the school timetable for such things as daily preparation, team meetings, contacting parents and resource people and stand-by. They also indicated the need for more block time to provide individual help and allow students to complete work, particularly in subjects such as industrial arts and family studies where set-up takes class time.

Too Few Staff; Too Little Subject Expertise: Teachers believe middle schools are understaffed and that by understaffing an atmosphere of "doing what you have to do" has been created in place of the desired "do what you would like to see done". In addition, the teaching of subjects in which the teacher is not familiar and expertise is not readily available in the school coupled with both the Board's and their own expectations of quality education, has resulted in mixed feelings concerning middle school teacher morale. In general, middle school teachers are conscientious and trying to cover all bases, but without support, they are beginning to feel the pressure, isolation and exhaustion.

Teachers feel there is a need for in-school subject specialists in each area, more consultative staff with an understanding of the middle school concept and more in-school support staff such as paraprofessionals to assist in the office and with Special Education. Teachers also expressed their desire for smaller classes or additional teaching staff, in order that individual student needs may be met more effectively.

Principals/Vice-Principals

Principals and Vice-Principals also identified a number of problems and made suggestions for improvement, some of which overlap with those given by teachers.

Middle school administrators indicated a desire for increased awareness and recognition of the middle school concept at the Board level so that Trustees and Senior Staff develop an understanding of middle school education. Most principals agreed that a middle school "champion" at the Superintendent level or above was needed to support their cause. An alternate suggestion was the creation of a middle school co-ordinator position.

More specifically, they requested support in terms of funds, material resources, textbooks, hands-on material and professional development activities. A strong emphasis was placed on the need for such services and materials to be focused exclusively on the middle school concept.

Principals and vice-principals also expressed a number of concerns related to staffing, most of which are intensified by declining enrolment. Some of these concerns were:

- it's difficult to find an appropriate group of teachers to meet all the school's program needs; so therefore suggest:
  - more principal autonomy in staff selection
  - retain the extra 1.5 staff allocation given to middle schools for start-up
  - consider the possibility of itinerant specialists and shared resources
- we don't have the resources to cover for staff who need to be released for meetings, workshops and professional development.
- it's difficult to find supply teachers who are qualified as both a generalist and a specialist. The few who are available are always in demand.
- we feel short-changed in leadership, e.g. need a fourth convenor for student support services. "As it stands, the vice-principal ends up doing most of the guidance and counselling".

Because of their overlapping responsibilities, middle school convenors are frequently attending chairmens' meetings which are not always appropriate, as well as being time-consuming. Some respondents felt that instead, there should be more interaction among both the administrators and the convenors of the middle school as a separate organization. Regular meetings of middle school personnel would be a more effective way of identifying and dealing with their unique needs and, at the same time, could enhance their cohesiveness as a group.

Another problem occurs when children from the feeder schools have the option of entering the middle school at either grade 6 or grade 7. According to one principal, this has two main drawbacks: i) a loss in the continuity of the middle school program for some students and ii) increased difficulty in accurately predicting enrolments. It was therefore recommended that all feeder schools send pupils to the middle school at the grade 6 level.

Finally, some principals expressed a fear that the school organization might gradually move to a JK - 8 with the eventual loss of the middle school component. The maintenance of an intermediate component with a sufficient number of students was stressed, particularly by the principals of a combined elementary and middle school. They argued that the adolescent program would not be feasible with split or mixed grades at the 6, 7 and 8 levels. It was also noted that effective adolescent programing really requires the special facilities of a junior high plant.

SUMMARY

An examination of the data collected from middle school administrators, teachers, parents and students indicates that, in general, the schools are making good progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Middle School Report.

The majority of respondents agreed that students are offered a good variety of subjects along with a balance of basic skills and different learning styles and experiences both in and outside the classroom. At all grade levels, middle schools have scheduled large blocks of time for instruction predominantly for the delivery of subjects by a core teacher or a team of teachers. In general, the schools have been most effective in meeting the criteria specified in the recommendations with respect to grades 7 and 8, i.e. 50% and 33% of the school day respectively, and least effective at the grade 6 level where on the average 66% of the school day is in a continuous block rather than the 75% specified in the recommendations. A number of teachers indicated that the amount of block time provided for core and other subject areas was inadequate and suggested that it be increased to allow for more individual assistance and to permit students to complete class work. The transition to a rotary system is gradual and certain subjects have been semestered. The proportion of time allotted for each curriculum area is as prescribed in the recommendations, i.e. 60-70% on communications and environmental studies and 30-40% on the arts.

The middle school concept also seeks to promote in each student positive self-awareness and self-direction and in this respect as well it appears that the recommendations are being successfully implemented; both parents and students reported that a positive self-concept and attitude towards learning are fostered. While the majority of parents indicated that there is an atmosphere of care and concern for early adolescents in the middle schools, students were less likely to agree. Both teachers and school administrators perceived the teaching staff to be highly motivated and involved in providing for student needs.

Assistance with staff development and the implementation of the recommendations has been provided by the Board's support staff. Principals and vice-principals noted examples of curriculum support, with particular reference to the Co-ordinator of Intermediate/Senior Education, and indicated that all or most of the integrated units developed by the Curriculum Department are currently in use. There were certain areas, however, where they expressed reservations regarding the resources made available to them. They felt that in many cases the assistance they received was not directed specifically to the middle school philosophy and expressed the desire that support staff be given in-service training regarding the middle school approach. Teachers agreed with their comments, adding that middle school curriculum guidelines were not yet available in a number of subject areas and that as a result, they were forced to spend considerable time reading, updating and implementing curriculum in addition to their teaching duties.

Concern was also expressed by school administrators and teachers with respect to the size of the middle schools. They strongly questioned their ability to provide appropriate program if the school enrolment continued to decline as this would entail problems with staffing, timetabling and school organization. The administrators stated that they were finding it difficult to provide "good" program with only 250-300 pupils and it was suggested that an "ideal" enrolment would be from 350-500 students.

While most respondents perceived the middle schools' communication with parents as being satisfactory, from one-quarter to one-third of parents didn't know/didn't respond to a number of the items on their questionnaire. This would seem to suggest that while communiation is good, there are still certain areas where parents' knowledge and understanding could be improved (i.e. philosophy of the middle school, staff characteristics, parent/community involvement and curriculum and program).

Although the majority of students responded positively to the questions concerning their middle school, there was often a tendency for the older students (especially those in Grade 8) to offer more negative responses. This was particularly true for items related to teacher attitude and school atmosphere. A similar pattern was evident among the responses of parents although this occurred to a somewhat lesser degree. Thus it would appear that as students progress through the grades, they become less satisfied with their teachers and environment.

Parents, teachers and school administrators were also asked for suggestions for enhancing the implementation of the middle school program. The parents' comments centred on activities related to specific subject areas, out-of-school and extracurricular activities, the development of academic and study skills, the need for teaching staff to become more actively involved in their students' progress and the need for the administrative staff to enforce stricter discipline and assume a more communicative role. Teachers expressed concern over the lack of appropriate resources and central staff with a knowledge and understanding of middle schools, and suggested that more time be set aside for such activities as daily preparation, team meetings, contacting parents and resource people,

and stand-by. They also expressed their desire for more block time and smaller classes and additional teaching staff in order to meet individual student needs more effectively. School administrators focused their remarks on staffing, the lack of central support for the middle school and the problems caused when children from the feeder schools have the option of entering the middle school at either grade 6 or grade 7. They suggested that regular meetings of middle school personnel be held as an effective way of identifying and dealing with their unique needs.

In brief, the results of the study indicate that the schools are making good progress towards implementing the recommendations in the Middle School Report.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire
(N=1298)

	Percentage Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1. Proportion of students participating	31	31	39
	%	%	%
2. My middle school is providing me with a good education.	86	82	71
3. My teachers teach in many ways, not just by talking to the class, (e.g. trips, in-class activities, experiments, acting out situations).	85	87	89
4. In class we are often given the chance to work on our own.	85	87	89
5. In class we are often given the chance to work together in small groups.	80	80	83
6. When we are working on projects and assignments our teachers let us make some of the decisions about the topic, the form of presentation and the length.	62	67	63
7. There is a way for me to make suggestions if I see a need for improvement in my middle school.	57	55	43
8. My teachers listen to what I have to say in class.	84	76	73
9. My teachers are willing to spend some time with me when I have a problem with my school work.	87	89	89
10. My teachers seem to understand students my age and their needs.	66	58	49
11. There is an adult in my middle school with whom I can talk.	55	60	51
12. My teachers really care about me.	62	52	38

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
13. My teachers seem to enjoy teaching.	73	65	58
14. I feel more comfortable in core/team period because I know the teacher(s) and other students well.	63	56	51
15. There is a feeling of care and concern for one another at this middle school.	52	53	39
16. I think my middle school offers a good variety of subjects.	80	81	68
17. I think I am taking too many subjects this year.	15	13	13
18. My teachers expect me to do homework.	71	90	93
19. This middle school has helped me to develop good study habits.	76	69	50
20. My report card helps me to understand how well I am doing in my classes.	88	86	83
21. I have talked with the guidance counsellor at least once this year.	24	34	41
22. Generally, my middle school has good facilities, (e.g. cafeteria, gym, science labs, industrial arts, family studies, music and art rooms).	91	86	85
23. The Library/Learning Resource Centre in our middle school is well stocked with a wide variety of materials, (e.g. books, film-strips, files).	81	68	55
24. There is always someone available to help me in the Library/Learning Resource Centre.	65	58	56
25. This year I have or will take part in a field-trip.	79	84	82
26. My parents have a good idea of how this school works.	61	64	53
27. I participate in school clubs, sports, and/or school interest groups outside of regular class time.	64	66	66
28. My parents are encouraged to contact or visit the school for any purpose.	59	63	60

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
29. Our middle school and teachers make us aware of the need to respect our community, (e.g. school and neighbourhood properties, parks, plazas).	72	72	65
30. People in the community are encouraged to call the school if they have any problems with students from our middle school.	57	67	58
31. At our middle school we make use of people and places in the community, (e.g. field-trips, speakers or visitors from the community).	66	71	60
Grade 8 students only			
32. I get help from a staff member at this school to decide which courses I should take in high school.	-	-	62
33. A staff member, at this school, is helping me to learn about career and job opportunities.	-	-	40
34. In general, I feel this middle school is helping to prepare me for secondary school.	-	-	66

Appendix B

Parents' Questionnaire
(N=698)

Parents who had more than one child enrolled in the middle school, were requested to respond to each item with regards to their OLDEST child.

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Proportion of parents responding	32	31	37
	Agreement		
	%	%	%
1. This middle school is providing my child with a good education.	81	86	82
2. My child's middle school seems to meet the special needs of this age group of students.	74	76	75
3. The teachers provide opportunities for the children to make decisions about their learning on a day-to-day basis in the classroom.	60	56	57
4. The students often participate in small group activities.	81	75	75
5. The teachers encourage students to think for themselves.	85	83	81
6. The program my child receives in this middle school takes into account her/his individual needs and abilities.	67	69	66
7. My child receives the individual attention he/she needs.	72	70	66
8. My child's ideas and opinions are encouraged and listened to by the staff.	65	62	53
9. This middle school assists students in developing a positive attitude towards learning.	81	78	74
10. This middle school assists students in developing good character and self-respect.	81	76	70
11. There is a feeling of care and concern for one another at my child's middle school.	69	66	56

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
12. My child enjoys going to school.	90	87	83
13. The teachers really care about my child.	79	77	70
14. The teachers in this middle school seem to enjoy working with early adolescents.	72	64	55
15. Having a teacher(s) work with my child for a large block of time, allows me to speak to someone who has a good understanding of my child's needs and abilities.	72	75	68
16. My child feels comfortable in core/team period because she/he knows the teacher(s) and other students well.	89	80	81
17. This middle school emphasizes the learning of the basic skills.	75	78	75
18. This middle school provides a proper balance between the basic skills and a variety of other courses and activities, (e.g. physical education, music, visual arts, family studies, industrial arts).	86	84	84
19. My child's report card assists me in understanding her/his progress.	90	90	85
20. My child's report card assists me in understanding his/her academic, social and emotional needs and abilities.	80	80	75
21. My child's involvement with the guidance/counselling services at this middle school has been satisfactory.	38	39	41
22. This middle school has assisted my child in developing effective study habits.	67	68	55
23. My child is expected to do homework.	82	89	88
24. This year my child has or will take part in a field trip.	84	86	81
25. The facilities at this middle school are adequate, (e.g. cafeteria, gymnasia, science laboratories, industrial arts, family studies, music and art rooms).	86	85	81

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
26. The Library/Learning Resource Centre at my child's middle school provides students with a wide variety of educational materials.	75	67	61
27. My child participates in school clubs, sports and/or interest groups outside of regular class time.	69	76	62
28. The school is effective in communicating its purposes and procedures to parents and the community.	76	74	70
29. The school is aware of the needs and concerns of parents and the community.	66	58	55
30. The school encourages me to call or visit the school if I have a concern about my child.	91	92	89
31. Members of the community are encouraged to call the school if they have any problems with students from the school.	67	66	68
32. This middle school utilizes resources from the community to facilitate or enrich the educational program.	55	53	53
33. Grade 6 students belong more in a middle school than they do in an elementary school.	73	51	44
34. This middle school provided a smooth educational transition from elementary school.	77	71	65

Please comment on this transition.

35. Some of the things that are presently being done at my child's middle school which I would like to see continued or expanded are:

Parents' comments have been included in the section on Suggestions for Impovement and Change

36. Some of the concepts and practices at my child's middle school which I find undesirable and would like to see changed are:

	Percent Agreement		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Only parents of students in Grade 8 are to answer the following questions.			
37. This middle school is adequately preparing my child for secondary school.	-	-	62
38. Guidance/counselling services are assisting my child in choosing an appropriate program for secondary school.	-	-	58
39. Guidance/counselling services are assisting my child in becoming more knowledgeable about career and job opportunities.			47

Appendix C

Summary of Timetable Organization

The following is a summary of information provided by each middle school regarding the organization of the school day and provision of curriculum at each grade level during the 1983-84 school year.

Timetable Structure

1.	Number of days per cycle:	4 (1)*	5 (3)	6 (1)
2.	Number of periods per cycle: (excluding lunch)	6 (3)	7 (1)	8 (1)

		Morning	Afternoon
3.	Amount of time per period:	40 min. (2) 50 min. (3)	40 min. (1) 50 min. (2) 55 min. (2)
4.	Amount of time timetabled between periods:	no time allocated in the timetable (5)	
5.	a) Number of lunch periods per day:	1 lunch period (4) 2 lunch periods (1)	
	b) Amount of time for lunch:	40 min, (1) 50 min. (1)	60 min. (1) 70 min. (2)
6.	Amount of time for recess/break:	Morning	Afternoon
		10 min. (2) 15 min. (3)	no time scheduled (5)

* The number in brackets represents the number of middle schools responding.

Program Schedule

7. Distribution of program

Curriculum Area	Subjects scheduled in block time (No. of Middle Schools)			Average Amount of Time Daily (minutes per day)		
	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8
Communications				130	135	133
Language Arts/English	5	5	5	58	50	50
Mathematics	5	5	5	46	45	44
French	2	1	1	26	40	39
Drama	1	1	1	included in language arts/ english environmental		
Environmental Studies				77	77	73
History	5	5	5	53	26	23
Geography		5	4		26	23
Science	1	1	1	24	25	25
Arts				103	95	95
Music				23	22	22
Physical and Health Education	3	3	3	34	35	33
Visual Arts	2	1	1	24	21	22
Industrial Arts/ Family Studies	2	1	1	22	22	22
Typing		2	3		17	19
Other						
Guidance	3	4	3	15	15	19
Computers	2	2	2	included in various subjects		

8. Coeducation in physical and health education

All middle schools reported their physical and health education program contained coeducational units.

When asked to list the units and grade levels, the five middle schools indicated the following distribution:

Coeducational Physical and Health Education Units	Number of Schools Responding		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
All units (all year)	3 (1 school - option to be independent)	1	2 (1 school - only 1 class)
All units except			
- sex education	1	1	1
- wrestling		1	1
Volleyball, basketball, dance and special days e.g. skiing, curling and horseback riding	1	1	1
None		1	1 (4 of 5 classes)

9. Subjects taught using an integrated and/or interdisciplinary approach

When asked to list the subjects being taught using either an integrated and/or interdisciplinary approach, middle school administrators were also requested to elaborate on their interpretation of each approach. The following statements represent the definitions submitted by the five schools.

Integrated Approach

- the use of a "thematic" approach which incorporates the blending or integration of several disciplines.
- independent teachers approaching a common topic (or) one teacher breaking a topic into disciplines and teaching individual disciplines e.g. science, music, history and geography.
- pupils assigned to a grade team of teachers in which each teacher teaches all disciplines to a select group of children (e.g. ability) usually involving language in conjunction with history and geography but where feasible, including mathematics.
- pupils studying many disciplines (subjects) within a topic under the direction of one teacher.

Interdisciplinary Approach

- the combining of two subject disciplines in various units of instruction.

- one teacher teaching a discipline (subject) which contains within it other subjects such as science, guidance and values.

- a way of organizing the faculty so that a group of teachers share:

  1) the responsibility for planning, teaching and evaluating curriculum and instruction in more than one academic area
  2) the same group of students
  3) the same schedule
  4) the same area of the building

  Interdisciplinary team teaching is not a critical element of the exemplary middle school; interdisciplinary team organization is.

- pupils assigned to a grade team of teachers in which each member of the team teaches a different discipline and all pupils rotate to each teacher.

- pupils assigned to a group of teachers in which each teacher teaches a different discipline and the pupils appreciate the inter-relationships.

	Number of Schools Responding					
	Intergrated Approach			Interdisciplinary Approach*		
Subject	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8	Gr. 6	Gr. 7	Gr. 8
Language Arts/English	5	5	5	1	1	1
History	4	5	4	1	1	1
Geography	4	4	4	1	1	1
Guidance	2	3	4	1		
Science	2	3	2	1	1	1
Math	3	1		2	2	2
French	1	2	1			
Music	1	1				
Visual Arts	2					
Industrial Art		1	1			
Family Studies		1	1			
Physical/Health Ed.	1					

* In addition, one school stated all subjects were being taught using an interdisciplinary approach

Appendix D

In-School Leadership Organization

1. Organization of Convenors in Middle Schools

Convenor Title	School				
	A	B	C	D	E
1. Communications	1		1		1
Language Arts		1		1+ Student Services	
2. Social/Environmental Studies	1		1		1
Pure and Applied Science		1		1	
3. Arts	1		1	1	
Exploratory Arts					1
4. Support Services	1 (unofficial)				1
Student and Community Services		1			

2. Convenor Areas of Responsibility

The following list illustrates the variety and diversity of convenor responsibilities in middle schools:

Communications
- Language Arts, English, French, Math, Drama and Grade Team Leader
- Language Arts, English, French, Typing, Drama, Grade Counselling and Grade Team Leader
- Language Arts, English, French, Drama Arts, Learning Resource Centre, Language Across the Curriculum and Interdisciplinary Team integration

Language Arts	-	Language Arts, English, French, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, History, Geography, Drama, Arts (Music and Typing) and Grade Team Leader
	-	Language Arts, English, French, Drama, Library, and Guidance, Special Education Team (E.S.L., Educable, Learning Disability) Enrichment, Talented and Gifted programs
Social/ Environmental Studies	-	Environmental Studies, History, Geography, Science, Outdoor Education and Grade Team Leader
	-	Social Studies, Environmental Studies, History, Geography, Science, Math and Computers, Grade 8 Counselling, Grade Team Leader, Co-ordinator of Grade Team Leaders, Guidance and out-of-school liaison
	-	Environmental Studies, History, Geography Math and Computer Keyboarding, Outdoor Education and Interdisciplinary Team integration
Pure and Applied Science	-	Math, Science, Outdoor Education, Computers, Science Arts (Visual and Physical and Health Education) and Grade Team Leader
	-	Math, Science, Outdoor Education, Computers
Arts	-	Industrial Arts, Family Studies, Visual Arts, Music, Physical and Health Education and Grade Team Leader
	-	Industrial Arts, Family Studies, Visual Arts, Music Physical and Health Education, Grade 7 Counselling and Grade Team Leader
	-	Industrial Arts, Family Studies, Visual Arts, Music, Physical and Health Education, Typing, Arts Team and budget
Exploratory Arts	-	Industrial Arts, Family Studies, Visual Arts, Music, Physical and Health Education, Interdisciplinary Team integration, and Exploratory Arts programs.
Support Services	-	Student Counselling, Guidance, Special Education (Educable, Learning Disability, Behavioural, E.S.L.), Enrichment, Library and Computer Keyboarding).
Student and Community Services	-	Student Counselling, Guidance, Community Services, Special Education (Educable, Behavioural, Learning Disabled), Enrichment, Arts (Family Studies, Industrial Arts and Crafts) and Grade Team Leader.

Teaching Teams

Four schools have a teacher team for each grade level. In three of the four schools a convenor is also the Grade Team Leader. In the fourth school, each teacher in the grade team takes responsibility for specific subject areas and certain team leader duties. The fifth school has two teams - Interdisciplinary and Exploratory Arts.

Other teams established with leadership duties assigned to teachers include:

Support Services Team
Resource Team (JK - 8)
Total Team (all middle school teachers)
Special Education Team
Arts Team
French Team
Curriculum Team

Appendix E

Interviews With Middle School Support Staff

In February, a similar series of interviews was conducted with the support staff in each middle school-clerical, caretaking, A.V. technicians, teacher aides and health nurse. A memo introducing the Research staff and the three questions to be asked in the interview was distributed to each person prior to the interview. Most interviews lasted one hour.

The questions support staff were asked to respond to were as follows:

1. What are some of the strengths of the middle school concept (what do you like about it)?

2. Is there anything you don't like about the middle school concept (any suggestions for change)?

3. How has working in a middle school been unique from your past experience?

In answering the above questions, support staff were asked to consider the following areas with respect to their role:

- Organization
- Leadership
- Morale
- Staff Development Activities
- Students
- Staff
- Community

The material from the interviews has been organized in three major sections similar to the findings from teachers:

A - Strengths of the Middle Schools

B - Problems of the Middle School

C - Suggestions for Change

A - Strengths of the Middle School

In organizing the comments about the strengths of middle schools three themes/categories emerged reflecting their role in the school:

(1) Child-centred Approach Has Many Benefits

(2) Middle School Organization Helps Students

(3) Good Community Relations

Each of these themes is elaborated on in point form in the following sections.

(1) Child-centred Approach Has Many Benefits

- child centred; not subject oriented/attention students get is marvelous and at this age they need lots
- age grouping better/fewer discipline problems/generally better behaved and more cooperative at this age/grade 8's better this year/halls safer - "You're not taking your life in your hands"
- 6 - 8 group more homogeneous in development/good not to have grade 9's whose presence places too much pressure on younger kids to grow up too fast/there are fewer smart alecs/kids easier to handle on field trips
- more family feeling/grade 6's still in need of personal attention, e.g. like to drop in to talk to office staff, friendlier more informal; school is smaller, we all deal with students and all have a say
- less vandalism and nature of vandalism changed - in junior high was malicious and there was loss of large items, now mostly small things disappear/no change in vandalism
- integration of special education students is very good; they don't feel left out, feel more a part of school
- like working with 7's and 8's; very stimulating; they're older and their problems are more interesting than elementary school students
- administration different - very open, supportive; makes office morale better; not as punishment oriented; communication much better/office now warm, welcoming - kids drop in to make social visits
- principal and vice-principal both do some teaching, good to have interaction with students, positive influence, students see principal and vice-principal as human beings and teachers, not just administrators

(2) Middle School Organization Helps Students

- integrated approach where students stay with one teacher fosters closer relationship between students and teachers - they see each other as people/fewer discipline problems
- like core time; think it's best for students; they are not responsible enough at this age to move from class to class; as consequence students don't wander into the office as frequently/not as distracted as on rotary system

- core makes it easier for office staff to find students when needed as there is less movement

- organization is super/good leadership/many meetings re: problems with input from all levels of staff/problems are tackled immediately

- good to have vice-principal - means there's always someone around to turn to when a problem arises

(3) Good Community Relations

- community oriented school/PTA is strong/staff involved with PTA/greater parent participation, community very supportive/older students important in conveying information to parents re: health problems of younger siblings particularly where language is a problem
- parents in here a lot as there is strong elementary flavour

- parents like concept of JK - 8 school/tell friends/there are constant inquiries about optional attendance

- open house was well attended, useful for changing poor image of grade 6's, very positive, lots of people, students felt good about it/elementary parents generally more involved than grade 9 parents

- more community involvement and outreach workers, potluck lunches at community centre, cooperation with Elementary Schools/lots of contact with parents - more elementary flavour although teachers don't like to make calls re:absentees

B - Problems of the Middle School

Support staff listed a number of problems. Their comments have been organized by themes/categories and by the role of various support staff.

(1) Physical Facilities

- renovations carried out during school year/involved numerous displacements/created difficult noise level

- locating a JK-8 school in a junior high school building presents problems for younger children, e.g. can't push doors open

- safety was problem/many parents drive kids to school/safety patrol established on grounds to handle this

(2) Less Office Staff and Recognition

- heavy workload for office/not enough time to do everything needed/office staff cut by one person/reporting is heavier in middle school than in junior high school yet junior high has three people in office

- pay of office staff is not commensurate with duties performed

- both office staff members classified as grade 4 clerks, senior secretary not paid for additional responsibility/principal still thinks of one person as head secretary

- when classified as elementary you are given mediocre, outdated equipment/not allowed to order equipment needed, e.g. electric stapler on collator

- more work created in office by nature of the community, e.g. students come for medical care/TLC; it's frustrating because we can't do everything, we'd like to help/special needs group demands a lot more attention; services of nurse for two half days a week is not enough in large school/older kids health problems tend to be more serious-headaches, falls, bumps, bruises/difficult for office staff to deal with these

- though B.A.R. (before absence reporting) is done by answering machine and parent volunteers, it still takes time because it's new and volunteers are learning

- in JK - 8 school office is centre for both schools, though two staffs are separate/there is little communication between staffs

(3) Increased Workload for Teacher Aides

- workload too heavy for Aide to take advantage of P.D. days - uses time to catch up

(4) Changing Workload for Audio Visual Technicians

- workload the same but nature of requests changed, less variety, more examination and dry mounting

- budget cut but prices rising and tax now has to be paid on materials

- bigger workload/change in role/hard to function in new structure - too many masters, have to prioritize

(5) More to do for Caretakers

- elementary arrangement of classrooms is harder to clean, requires more caretaking time, e.g. chairs together or in circle, crowded room, carpeting and books in desks

- cleaning of classrooms has to be left to 4 - 12 shift as rooms occupied all day long

- caretaker frequently interrupted during lunch break as there is only one caretaker on duty

(6) Additional Problems Mentioned

- we have 'floating dollar' for lunch for students who come without, but usually have 10 students with no lunch

- rotary system hard on grade 6's, 40 minute periods too short, need 10 minutes to settle down, to shift thoughts from one subject to another/6's not used to freedom provided by rotary, tend to roam between classes, e.g. drop into office

- Student Council is run by staff, not students; lessened school spirit/not enough student responsibility

- staff has high expectations of middle school and themselves; hard to keep up to standards they set; pressure is not always manageable

- little time for lunch/teachers are tired, drained

- staff not open, don't want to hear negative ideas/staff say everything is good but don't act to correct problems

- community had poor image of the junior high school/still some carry over

C - Suggestions for Change

Support staff suggested the following changes to help both teachers and themselves to provide better service in the schools.

- reinforce new and fresh image of middle school by giving school a new name when converting to a middle school, would eliminate poor image of junior high school

- create special status for middle school - don't rank with elementary schools

- schools should take students from K - 8, teachers and students get to know each other better, more like a family, creates respect and less need for discipline, not good for students to change schools every 2 - 3 years

- need more help with special education/either more teachers or para-professionals, or smaller P.T.R./separate classes, e.g. behavioural

- first need recognition as special needs school/provide instruction in life skills, e.g. personal hygiene, nutrition, honesty/more buses needed to eliminate problem re: distribution of T.T.C. tickets by office staff

- provide parenting courses

- psychologist should either be on call or make more frequent visits to school

- nurse should be stationed in school more frequently

- reclassification of office staff to allow adequate compensation for responsibility carried/senior person in office should be a grade 5

- restore size of office staff to three people/need another secretary half time

- provide more and better office equipment

- provide a counter in the office to give staff some distance from students and more opportunity to get work done

- provide time for all staff to meet in small groups to discuss concerns

Appendix F

Survey of Parents Requesting Optional Attendance or Interborough Transfer

Another perspective on the middle school was gained from parents who had requested optional attendance or an interborough transfer involving a middle school. In the four years since the first middle school was established, forty-eight of the parents have requested that their child attend a middle school through optional attendance and 131 parents have transferred their child out of a middle school.

Seventy-seven (43%) of the 179 parents identified were interviewed over the telephone regarding:

- their reason for requesting the change (i.e. into or out of the middle school)
- degree of satisfaction with the middle school
- benefits of moving their child out of the middle school.

Twenty-four of the 77 parents contacted had requested that their child be sent to a middle school for the following reasons:

	No. of Responses
. The organization of the middle school e.g. prefer an elementary atmosphere/JK - 8 system with younger children/teachers were "hand-picked"/prefer the larger school with no split grades and more opportunities for different studies	11
. The middle school had a good reputation in terms of academic orientation	8
. Sibling already attending	3
. Accessibility of the school in terms of distance from home and available transportation.	2

Of the 24 parents contacted, 15 have a child who is still in attendance at a middle school. Thirteen of the 15 parents indicated that they are satisfied with the education their child is receiving in the middle school for the following reasons:

. My child is happy, doing well, likes the school	8
. Middle school offers a good program, more activities than other schools	6

	No. of Responses
. Teachers are interested in my child's development/care very much/good	4
. No problems with older students, drugs	2

The two parents who said they were not satisfied with middle school education indicated that there was not enough discipline in the school.

Fifty-three parents who were contacted, indicated that they sent their child to another school rather than a middle school. Their reasons were as follows:

. The Other School had a Better Reputation	28
- the academic and social reputation of the other school was good/had a reputation of preparing students for secondary school/ offered greater variety of program (16)	
- the school was well established (5)	
- the school was in a better area (4)	
- we liked the school (3)	
. Friends and siblings were attending the other school	20
. Other school was more accessible	11
. Other school fed into the desired secondary school	7
. Preferred child to be three years in the same school rather than 2 years in a middle school and then change to secondary school for grade 9	4
. Classes in the other school were smaller	2

Forty-one of the 53 parents felt that the move out of a middle school to another school had been beneficial for their child for the following reasons:

. The child is happy now/doing well/this school helped our child mature	32
. The child is getting a good education	11
. By remaining at one school for a longer time, our child has made new friends	1
. There is better integration with the secondary school which our child will attend	1

No. of Responses

The remaining 12 parents said they didn't know if the move had been beneficial, although nine qualified their responses as follows:

- Depends on what criteria you use - academic, social or the child's happiness 4
- Not a fair question because our child never attended a middle school/don't know much about middle schools 4
- Child is not that happy but might not be happy anywhere 1
- Selected the school for location, not anything else 1
- Too early to tell 1

In summary the factor most frequently expressed by parents when requesting optional attendance or an interborough transfer concerning a middle school was the academic and social reputation of the school. Other reasons frequently influencing the parents choice of school, were the organization of the school and the ease of travelling to and from the school. When asked if they are presently satisfied with the education their child is receiving, most parents of children both in a middle school as well as in other schools, supported their choice based mainly on how happy or how well (academically) their child is doing.